

critical digest

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New York Theatre Week

I Feel Wonderful- De Lys 10/18/54. Sidney Oshrin presents new musical revue by Jerry Herman & Barry Alan Grael...Sands of Negev-President 10/19/54. B & L Rothman present Israeli play in English by Yigal Mossensohn with Celia Adler...Peter Pan-Winter Garden 10/20/54. Richard Halliday presents musical version of Barrie play with Mary Martin, Cyril Ritchard...A Stone For Danny Fisher-Downtown National -10/21/54 Jacobson & Adler present Leonard Kantor's adaptation of Harold Robbins novel with Zero Mostel, Bert Freed.

Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

The Tender Trap- Longacre 10/13/54. News and Mirror reviewers okayed new comedy, while majority panned it. Max Shulman and Robert Paul Smith's farce about a quartet of females battling over one lone bachelor was termed a skillfully contrived and very enjoyable farce by Chapman, News, and a real laugh champ by Coleman, Mirror. While both critics okayed leads Ronnie Graham and Robert Preston, News critic suggested out of 12 minutes. Dissenters headed by Atkinson, Times, thought there was a lot of noise and motion in the Clinton Wilder production, but not much entertainment. Script, he fears, has more desperation than humor. Watts, Post, billed comedy as best "straight" play of season. Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, among others, singled out Parker McCormick for her fine comedy bit. Many complained of the "un-airconditioned" house on the unseasonable warm night. McClain, Journal American, marked off the effort as slim and repetitious.

Fragile Fox- Belasco- 10/13/54. Journal-American and World Telegram & Sun aisle sitters recommended Norman Brooks new war play presented by Paul Vroom and starring Dane Clark. Excellent play and cast which brings the illusion of front line warfare to the stage, noted former. While latter critic suggested play would be near perfect if final scene played less pretentiously. Don Taylor, James Gregory and Andrew Dugan were applauded in all male cast directed by Herbert Swope, Jr. Crahan Denton was picked by Atkinson, Times, as best actor in play which never rang true to him. Looseness and commonplaceness of the writing was picked as major fault by Times. Though script has good many merits of unabashed melodrama, it sometimes turns into villainous buffoonery, panned Kerr, Herald Tribune. If you want something more than surface values in your serious drama, Chapman, News, advises theatre fans to keep away. Watts, Post, thought show lacked point of view and dramatic forcefulness.

On Your Toes- 46th St Theatre 10/11/54. Handsome, pleasant and dull is the conclusion of all NYC daily reviewers on George Abbott's revival of the 1936 Rodgers & Hart musical comedy take-off on Russian ballet. Bobby Van, Vera Zorina and Elaine Stritch were mildly approved by most, but were not cheered enough to put the verdicts in the "pro" column. 18 years is a trifle too old, notes Atkinson, Times. It just passes by, waving farewell, reports Kerr, Herald Tribune. Elaine Stritch's rendition of "You Took Advantage of Me" was saluted as show's best by most. "Slaughter on 10th Avenue" ballet drew mixed views. Major complaints concerned the excess of "book" in the first act. Producers are reported to be slicing same in line with the suggestion's of critics.

 ' Off Broadway '

Off Broadway Theatre League has set up mid-town offices at "Theatre-goers, Inc" offices, 1501 Broadway and plans to start a central ticket agency for Off Broadway shows.

Today's Theatre Players will present John Sheffield's The Imploring Flame at University Settlement House, 184 Eldridge St, NYC Sat & Suns...Phillip Pine has taken over title role of A Stone for Danny Fisher...Players Theatre hunting for new house for The Clandestine Marriage which must move from Provincetown Nov 7...Theatre Unlimited will present plays at Open Door at end of Oct...Vincent Wray has replaced Renaldo Reynolds in leading role of Originals Only The Chair.

Equity Library will present Fallen Angels Oct 20-24, The Heiress Nov 3-7,...The Doughgirls Nov 17-21...Ring Round the Moon plays at 8 40 Theatre, West Side YMCA Oct 22-24...If I Were You presented by Group One Oct 25 at Amato Theatre.

Noah production by Broadway Chapel Players presented Sundays only was rated as reverent and often emotionally compelling drama by Geor, Variety.

The Clandestine Marriage presented at Provincetown Playhouse was highly recommended by Greenberg, Show Business as a delightful domestic comedy of the 18th Century presented with inventiveness and vitality.

 ' Yiddish Theatre '

Wish Me Luck Yiddish musical comedy has moved opening date to Oct 30 at Second Ave. Theatre.

Will They Remember comedy drama at Brooklyn Parkway is an excellent start by Hebrew Actors Union, okays Rosenberg, Post. Schedule provides for new cast every four weeks. If succeeding plays attain the standard of entertainment offered in this, critic noted, project of union seems sure of success.

 ' West Coast '

Yellow Jack will be presented at Coast Theatre, Santa Monica for two weeks at old location of Uplifters Club, Whit Bissell directing...Face to Face with Jessica Tandy-Hume Cronyn opens Oct 25 at Huntington Hartford Theatre, LA...Seven Year Itch with Eddie Bracken playing at Portland Auditorium.

 ' Vaudeville '

Radio City Music Hall show features Jacqueline Langee, Eddy Ruhl, Lee Marcellis, Chet Clark in "Miss Liberty" revue...New Palace stage show features Gene Bianco, Rex Weber, Renowns, Wilfred Mae trio, Nikki & Noel, Ladd Lyon, Louis & Oliver Sisters.

 ' Theatre Book Comments '

"The Laughton Story" by Kurt Singer (Winston) is a lengthy valentine which fails to project a dimensional portrait of the subject, pans Down, Variety.

 ' Theatre TV Comments '

Man Who Came to Dinner production on BCS TV Best of Broadway series with all star cast drew mixed notices from NYC TV critics. Gould, Times, felt show was so out to fit one hour that play's treasured vials of vitriol were diluted to a bottle full of stage pop... Except for Merle Oberon TuckPos t, thought entire production and cast was fine...Obrian, Journal American, was a bit upset that the youngsters in the household may have learned some new swearwords via TV, but otherwise enjoyed it.

! Green Room Department !

DRAMA TIME-LAG....Picasso and Berg are old news in their own fields, yet nothing comparable to them has come into modern theatre writing, points out "Stage" editorial. Dramatists who believe they can make the time-lag less marked, and provide work that is new and vital, must themselves be bold and clamouring, as well as patient and critical.

COLUMN TIPS....Cost \$8000 to move By the Beautiful Sea to a theatre around the corner, reports Winchell...Pajama Game chorus won \$10 raise, notes Lyons...Fanny's most temperamental star is Walter Slezak, rates Kilgallen.

FRACTURED THEATRE....Burr, Playbill, suggests pun game on theatre names, and seeks suggestions for other type theatre fun quizzes. His starts with name of person sure to give a business loan (Bankhead), name of wife-murderer (Kilbride), and what Cockney says as surprise (Good 'Evans).

CRITICAL THOUGHTS....Producers should sign Phyllis McGinley to write lyrics for a Broadway musical, suggests NBC Pearson, Critic at Large...The fact that "expense account" theatre goers can buy Pajama Game duets at \$30 per seat kills off a lot of potential theatre goers who will not take second best, explains McClain, Journal American...Viewing 4 plays in an evening Chapman, News, fears that long run hits slow down because the actors were waiting for the audience to react and visa versa. The actor must realize he is in command of the audience.

AMATEUR ADVICE....Why entrust America's theatrical arts to amateur auspices, is the question professional showfolk are asking, states Variety editorial. If the US government is anxious to showcase Yankee stagecraft, why not call on Rodgers & Hammerstein, Leland Hayward, etc rather than an advisory panel headed by ANTA?

INTERVIEW HI-LITES....New Yorkers are too provincial, they think they are the only good audience, Dore Clark, Fragile Fox, told Herridge, Post. Taste is universal. The actor believes you will find as much appreciation for good theatre in Columbus or Timbuctoo as in NY. Clark admits he has made some movies so bad they have made him ill. But in doing these to make money he has had the freedom to do such plays as the current one...The mysterious wire that enables Mary Martin to "fly" in Peter Pan is 3/32 of an inch thick, Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun learned The equipment used is tested to 4000 pounds. A Chicago critic weighing 300 pounds tested the equipment and lived... write the tale.

! Pros & Cons by TMK !

On Your Toes is a pleasant revival of the Rodgers & Hart musical which most will enjoy if they don't worry too much about the dull book. Bobby Van, Vera Zorina and Elaine Stritch give fine, if unexciting, versions of a dozen good songs. Dancing ranges from sloppy (first act) to perfect (Slaughter on Tenth Avenue). Elaine Stritch stands out as the star of the evening in spite of the billing. TV has made the subject of satire on ballet old hat.

The Tender Trap is a comedy-drama in which the dramatic moments are better than the so-called comic ones. At least two of the main characters seem badly cast for the comedy sections. The quartet of low voiced damsels are fine enough, but not funny enough. At least one theatre-goer would have loved to see the "off-stage" party which sounds as if it might have been hilarious if done onstage.

NYC may have a municipal summer theatre operation in Randalls Island Stadium, patterned after the successful municipally operated Playhouse in the Park project in Philadelphia. Ralph Bellamy, Actors Equity president, announced at a luncheon honoring John Kelly, vice president of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park Commission, that the theatre craft unions of NYC were planning to hold discussions and seek action along these lines. Kelly said he would gladly visit any city planning a similar enterprise and give advice on the basis of his own experience.

Plays

Home Is The Hero closed...On Your Toes is being revised in line with critics suggestions on book...One Eye Closed, a new satire by Justin Sturm, will open at the Bijou Nov 24 after a week's tryout in Boston...Witness for the Prosecution, Agatha Christie's murder-mystery, will be presented Dec 16 by Gilbert Miller, with Robert Lewis directing...Ballet Ballads will be revived in February by Robert Fanning with Sona Osato repeating her role in musical presented in 1948 by Experimental Theatre...Say It With Music, Irving Berlin's tribute to the Music Box Theatre, is still a possibility.

People

Walter Kerr, Herald Tribune, elected president of Critics Circle...Herman Levin elected president of League of NY Theatres...Dennis King will play a Judge in Lunatics and Lovers...Leon Janney and Martin Ritt will play sons of Noah in The Flowering Peach...Rawn Spearman will play lead in House of Flowers...Patty McCormick will play lead in The Bad Seed Ward Morehouse has resigned as drama columnist of World Telegram & Sun, but will continue his review column for North American Newspaper Alliance...Russ McLaughlin has resigned as drama critic of Detroit News.

Other Broadways

Minor Latham Drama Workshop at Barnard College opened with a reception and a one act comedy for Barnard graduates...Theatre 200, Inc, which achieved its goal of raising \$500,000 working capital, held its first stockholders meeting and elected Edward Spector president...Girl on the Via Flaminia received poor notices on its London debut.

Theatre Record Notes

RCA Victor out "original cast" album of NBC TV colorcast of Lady in the Dark starring Ann Sothern. Victor also released album of show with Gertrude Lawrence on both LP and extended play discs.

Theatre TV Notes

Maurice Evans will be interviewed on CBS TV Person to Person Nov 26, prior to his Nov 28 NBC TV production of Macbeth

CRITICAL DIGEST
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